State Guidelines
Point in Time and Housing Inventory Count of People Experiencing Homelessness

January 2019
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Contact Information

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https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/annual-point-time-count/
General Requirements

Counties must ensure the following:

1. Conduct the count on January 24, 2019 (exceptions described in Date of Count).
2. Obtain written consent from the respondent to collect personal identifiers.
3. Ask respondent if they have been previously counted before conducting the survey.
4. Count all people experiencing homelessness in emergency or transitional housing.
5. Count people living outside, in cars, in tents, encampments and other “unsheltered” places.

Introduction

The Washington State Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act (RCW 43.185C.030) requires all counties to conduct an annual count of people experiencing homelessness.

These Guidelines include the following information:

1. Links to authorization legislation.
2. 2019 count date.
3. Explanation of who is counted and how to comply with protecting information.
4. Required data elements.
5. General requirements and best practices.

Counties are encouraged to review the Housing and Urban Development web based information located here: [https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/guides/pit-hic/#general-pit-guides-and-tools](https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/guides/pit-hic/#general-pit-guides-and-tools) and adopt standardized best practices that best meet the needs of their communities.

Date of Count

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) directs Continuums of Care to perform a point in time count (PIT) and housing inventory count (HIC) of people experiencing homelessness during the last ten days of January.

The state mandated count is Thursday, January 24, 2019.

If a specific facility/program is not able to collect data on that day (or counting on that day would significantly undercount unique individuals frequenting that location), the program/facility can count on any day during the last ten days of January. Communities will need to ensure that the count is unduplicated.

Example: a food bank is only open on Saturday. The Food Bank would need to make clear to respondents that the count was also conducted a few days prior and to only fill-
out the form if they didn’t complete it on Thursday. Respondents should be asked to indicate where they slept on the night of the point in time count.

In special circumstances (such as rural areas) the count can be performed over the course of several days, provided efforts are made to un-duplicate count data and refer to the night of the count.

Housing Inventory Count
HUD requires counties to collect information on the number of individuals in each homeless program included in the housing inventory chart. This includes all emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and rent assistance programs.

Housing inventory count information is collected during the same week as the point in time count. Counties will be responsible for providing accurate data on the number of individuals staying at each facility using Commerce HMIS. Commerce staff will contact local communities to gather this information typically in the Spring following the count.

Who is counted?
1. People self-identifying as homeless.
2. People living in emergency shelters (including motel/hotel vouchers).
3. People living in transitional housing.
4. People living unsheltered and in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, on the street.
5. People living in places not intended for human habitation.

Transitional housing refers to a homeless housing program where participants have signed a lease or occupancy agreement.

Unsheltered Standards for RVs:
• RVs (and boats designed to live in) don’t count as unsheltered. However, if the surveyor comes across (or knows about) RVs outside of RV parks that are in such a broken-down or inoperative state that they are no longer fit for human habitation (no longer has the features that distinguish it from a regular vehicle like the ability to cook or bathe) then they do count as unsheltered.
• Most RVs would not fall in this category – only those that are no better than automobiles or tents with people living there because they have no adequate sheltered options.
• Mobile homes would not fall into this category and persons living in them are considered housed.

HUD FAQ on Unsheltered Homelessness (2014):
“In general, for purposes of the Point-in-Time (PIT) count, HUD considers individuals and families sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g., abandoned buildings, train stations, or camping grounds) as “unsheltered” homeless. Additionally, HUD would generally consider individuals and families sleeping in a garage, shed, or other location outside of a housing structure, but on the property of a housing structure as “unsheltered” homeless for purposes of the PIT count. However, for purposes of counting, HUD would not consider any individual or family sleeping inside of a housing
structure as unsheltered homeless, even if the room inside of that housing structure is not typically used for sleeping (e.g., a kitchen or bathroom). Please note that HUD would still consider persons sleeping in the hallway of an apartment or hotel (i.e., outside of an apartment unit or hotel room) as unsheltered.”


Temporarily Living with Family or Friends
People living temporarily with family or friends due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (often referred to as “doubled-up” or “couch surfing”) do not meet the HUD definition of homeless. There is no requirement to count these individuals; however this data is useful in identifying the need for housing and services.

Data, HMIS, Consent

Protecting Personal Information
Personally identifying information (such as names, birthdays, addresses, etc.) cannot be collected unless written consent is obtained from the person providing the information. More information can be found Washington State Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act (43.185C.180). In addition the Federal HEARTH Act provides guidance HEARTH ACT.

The term ‘personally identifying information’ means individually identifying information for or about an individual, including information likely to disclose the location of a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, including:

1. first and last name;
2. home or other physical address;
3. contact information (including a postal, e-mail or Internet protocol address, or telephone or facsimile number);
4. social security number; and
5. any other information, including date of birth, racial or ethnic background, or religious affiliation, that, in combination with any other non-personally identifying information, would serve to identify any individual.

Any personally identifying information collected by the count must be protected from release to people not directly involved in the count process. Steps should be taken to ensure that only people that must view personally identifying information as part of the counting process have access to that information.

People collecting and handling personally identifying information must be explicitly instructed that the information must remain confidential, and steps must be taken to ensure that personally identifying information contained on paper forms and databases is secured from unauthorized access.
Written consent forms authorizing the collection of personally identifying information must explicitly state how the information will be used, that people being surveyed are under no obligation to provide personally identifying information, and the potential risks of providing information.

**Important Note:** No personally identifying information should be entered into HMIS as part of the count from persons who are 1) in a DV agency; 2) currently fleeing or in danger from a domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking situation or 3) has HIV/AIDS.

**Required Data Elements**
Each county must provide counts for each of the following data elements. The importance of accurate information collection descends by the order listed below. Counties may collect additional information but only the required data elements are required for submission to the state. This data is to be entered into HMIS for counties within the Balance of State.

**Elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Persons (all household types)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Persons by gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Single persons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Households (all household types)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Households with minor children accompanied by an adult(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Minor children in households, accompanied by an adult(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Persons under age 18 unaccompanied by an adult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Households with no minor children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Senior citizens (aged 65 or older)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 1-9 above Unsheltered. (In places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, on the street)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11 1-9 above in Emergency Shelter (1-90 day time limits)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1-9 above in Transitional Housing (91 days to 2 years time limit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chronically homeless individuals (Homeless more than one year OR more than three times in last three years with the combined length of homelessness being one year or more; with disability)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Chronically homeless families</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Race</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Veterans</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Mentally disabled</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Persons with alcohol or other drug abuse problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Physically disabled</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Persons with both substance use and mental health problems (formally diagnosed or self identified)</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Domestic violence survivors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Persons with HIV/AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Seasonal agricultural workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>